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PHILOSOPHY IN FRANCE

I

I FANCY there are in America not a few who like myself have often wished they might know what all those names in Alcan's catalogue stand for. At last we have an account of French philosophy during the period 1890-1914, with a sketch of its antecedents, an account remarkably rich and at once highly appreciative and very critical.¹ We do not learn what all the names in Alcan's list stand for, but we learn about many of them, and these, the writer assures us, are the names that best represent the recent tendencies. I translate M. Parodi's own words:

"It is, in fact, between 1885 and 1890 that French thought seems to show a singularly increased activity and a new spirit. At the same time philosophy begins to touch the larger public and to influence literary groups. We must not forget that the two most distinguished writers of the preceding generation, Taine and Renan, who had at this time reached their greatest fame and nearly finished their work, were philosophers essentially; under their influence the interest in ideas became universal, and the non-professional preoccupation with them (*'le dilettantisme'*) was a moral and a literary as well as a philosophical movement" (p. 13). "Jules Lemaitre has said somewhere that while in the preceding period it was the course in rhetoric that made the greatest impression on students, about 1890 it was unquestionably the course in philosophy" (p. 14). "It was the moment too when a series of famous theses opened new paths: that of M. Bergson was defended in 1889, and that of M. Durkheim in 1893. Notes of M. Jules Lachelier's courses were being passed about; the teaching of M. Boutroux had reached its brilliant point. It may be said that contemporary philosophy shows from this time on its distinctive traits" (p. 15).

What are these traits? They appear in the passing of the dialectical philosophy of preceding years, the increasing prevalence of the scientific temperament, and the emphasis upon empirical method that we are now familiar with. Many of the old problems are almost ignored. The problems that really interest are problems about the nature of science and its kind of validity. Parodi says they are exclusively of this type, and the statement is the more significant because he admits it with regret, and would like to see a certain revival of "rationalism." These problems get their philosophical shading, however, from their relation to the antinomy of mechanism

¹ *La Philosophie contemporaine en France. Essai de classification des doctrines.* D. Parodi. Paris: Félix Alcan. 1919. Pp. 502.

and freedom. "The problem of freedom has become decidedly the central problem of philosophy, the one around which all the others, the problem of knowledge included, have come to gravitate." French philosophy is thus at present electrified by the sting of problems about morals (pp. 17, 161). Moreover, in the intimate contact of philosophy with science, a striking fact is the agreement between the men of these two types of training. "Indeed the philosophy of the sciences, which some would like to make the total subject matter of philosophy, is, just now in any case, the field most cultivated and most honored" (p. 16).

But although contemporary philosophy has this general character, there is nothing like a doctrinal agreement. In the teaching of philosophy as it occurs in public instruction there is no dogmatic common direction, which is one proof, among others, that no school can be pointed to as more characteristic than another as regards its positive conclusions. Rationalism and idealism are still defended; LeRoy and Sorel can interpret Bergson in diametrically opposite ways. There is the spirit of Hamelin, and the spirit of Le Dantec. What gives to French philosophy of to-day its distinctive quality is that critical attitude that goes by the somewhat misleading name of "anti-intellectualism." This attitude by virtue of its empiricism and its reaction against a conceptualistic tradition, includes an interest in spontaneity, in life (*la vie inépuisable*), that, historically, has been the burden of romanticism. Over against what M. Parodi calls "*ce romantisme philosophique*" there is rationalism with an empirical and an idealistic emphasis. "Perhaps one might say from this point of view, that our period is a moment in the great conflict between romanticism and classicism in philosophy" (p. 457).

II

Whence this anti-intellectualism and what are its relations to the earlier movements? It is, at least, not a response to foreign influences, for on the whole, Parodi insists, French philosophy has not been greatly affected by them. Schopenhauer and Spencer, and in our own day Nietzsche and James, have touched the surface. Kant and his immediate successors went a little deeper. But the substance of French philosophy has been the product of French criticism (p. 21). And this, for the nineteenth century, can be described as showing four stages. Briefly these are the reaction after the Revolution (Bonald and de Maistre); the July Restoration, Cousin's official philosophy of compromise, and the psychological spiritualism of Maine de Biran; then the first period of Comte's influence, followed by Littré, Renan and Taine, the propertied class inclining nervously more and more to clericalism as to the social

rampart, while in all circles where criticism was alive, positivism prevailed with its indifference to metaphysics, its cult of facts and its confidence in science; fourth and last, 1870 and the Commune, the sense of a crisis for the nation's vitality and a will to think seriously and thoroughly. This stage shows three groups: (a) Littré, Taine, Berthelot, and the first disciples of Comte, the theory of evolution with its corollary of progress; (b) the influence of German scholarship and of German transcendentalism (Jules Lachelier); (c) Cournot and Renouvier.

A movement that could be called anti-intellectualistic would seem to be a reaction against these antecedents. But M. Parodi insists that it issues from the speculations that precede it. This may be so, but I am tempted to look outside of a philosophical tradition for some, at least, of the causes of the contemporary criticism of rationalism. For one thing, the extraordinary progress of science, coupled with the facts that rationalism was usually engaged in disguised apologetics, and that the habit of taking supernaturalism for granted in some phraseology of metaphysics has steadily been growing weaker, accounts for a great deal. Also the exciting social and political history of France, the friction between the government and ecclesiastical institutions, must have been immensely favorable to the cultivation of spontaneous curiosity and criticism. And after all, with fertile minds, a type of problem in time often becomes antiquated and stale. This is a kind of explanation which a rationalist like M. Parodi may not relish, but which I, for one, wish he had taken account of.

The contemporary period is described by M. Parodi in ten chapters, entitled: "Essays in Synthesis, philosophy that is comprehensive in a somewhat Spencerian fashion; The Historians; The Psychologists; Émile Durkheim and the School of Sociology; the Philosophy of Émile Boutroux; The Critique of Scientific Mechanism; The Philosophy of M. Bergson; Bergsonism and Intellectualism; The Moral Problem; Rationalism and Idealism." There is also a chapter of conclusions, and Chapter I. devoted to antecedents. It is impossible, of course, to say much about all these chapters, but the author is certainly entitled to praise for the admirable way in which his pages of exposition are free from criticism. The heart of the whole matter is in the chapter on the critique of mechanism. Here, following upon the names of Liard, Evellin, Hannequin, Meyerson, who raised the question somewhat incidentally, come the names of Milhaud, Poincaré and Duhem. The critique of mechanism was initiated mainly, however, by M. Boutroux, who attacked the dogmatism of the Cartesian tradition, first in his thesis of 1874 (*De la Contingence*

des lois de la nature), and subsequently in his more advanced *L'Idée de la loi naturelle*. And Parodi quotes the following: "Man circumscribes his own field of research; he purposes to consider only a certain order of facts, those that can be numbered and measured, and to ignore the rest. It is only 'by virtue of this restriction that we deal with objects of an appreciably mathematical character.'" As Parodi observes, this was an "*idée capitale, qui devait faire fortune parmi nos contemporaines*" (p. 179).

Parodi mentions many interesting writers and describes their philosophical contributions—names that must be omitted from this summary review. But Gaston Milhaud (*Les Conditions et les limites de la certitude logique*, 1894, and *Le Rationalisme*, 1897) must not be overlooked. Milhaud continues and completes the work of Liard, of Evellin and of Hannequin. Milhaud dispels the phantom of logical absolutes in the field of existence. Americans might do well to study his paper, *L'Idée de science* in *Memoires du Congrès de Philosophie de Genève*.

There is no space to pause on the historians of philosophy or on the psychologists. The chapter on Durkheim is clear and helpful. According to M. Parodi, the work of Espinas prepared directly that of Durkheim, presumably through the former's conception of a social conscience, since for Durkheim the specific mark of a social fact is the feature of obligation or duty that belongs to it. Espinas continued the biological theory of sociology made popular by Spencer, while Tarde stood for a psychological point of view. It was Durkheim, however, who demanded that social facts should be determined by their own specific character, and not by what characterized some other field of inquiry. The all-importance of the group for the individual ("*l'âme est fille de la cité*") was announced, though, by M. de Roberty and M. de Greef, not Frenchmen, but writing in French, and by M. Jean Izoulet (*La Cité moderne*, 1894). Important collaborators of Durkheim are M. Lévy-Bruhl and MM. Hubert and Mauss. An independent disciple of Durkheim is M. Bouglé (*Les Idées égalitaires* and *Le Régime des castes*).

There is much in the work of M. Boutroux that anticipates, somewhat dimly, of course, the ideas of M. Bergson. Parodi quotes this among other things: "*Et encore, ce n'est pas la nature des choses qui doit être l'objet suprême de nos recherches, c'est leur histoire.*" M. Bergson had M. Boutroux for one of his teachers when the latter was initiating the critique of scientific method. M. Parodi's exposition of the philosophy of Bergson is admirable, but I will not mutilate it by fragmentary paraphrase. It is interesting to know, however, that the philosophy of M. Bergson, in so far as this is a

reaction against the doctrine of mechanism and dialectical intellectualism, "marks the triumph of tendencies long active, not only in philosophy, but in modern imagination as a whole, and which one might follow back to Rousseau through French and German romanticism" (p. 290). A writer who, in certain respects, shows the same preoccupation as Bergson and some of the same influences, is Gabriel Séailles (*Essai sur le Génie dans l'Art*, 1883). M. Dunan reaches conclusions much like those of M. Bergson. The quotations from Dunan are interesting; here is one: "It is not more rigorous reasoning that we need, but new ideas, in closer touch with experience (*mieux orientés*) than those of our predecessors." For M. Georges Remacle the traditional error of philosophy has been to consider consciousness as an image of things. It is more akin to the categories of art and of morals than to the categories of truth.

M. Bergson has not yet developed, himself, the practical implications of his philosophy, but "among French thinkers, those who have most emphatically claimed to be his disciples are concerned, first of all, with religious or social action." M. Maurice Blondel (*L'Action*, thesis defended in 1893, and of which the reprinting was forbidden by ecclesiastical authority) makes primary the spontaneity of the will. M. Le Roy is, however, the most explicit adapter of M. Bergson's ideas to confessional uses, making himself thereby the boldest and most original of the "modernist" group. Le Roy has applied Bergson's theory of concepts to the definition of dogma. "'Christianity is not a system of speculative philosophy, but a rule of life, a discipline of moral and religious action.' 'God is personal' means simply 'act, in your relations with God as you would with a human person.' 'Jesus is risen' signifies 'maintain those relations with Him that you would have maintained before His death, and that you would maintain toward a contemporary.' . . . At most, from the strictly intellectual point of view, dogma might have one other function, that of excluding certain errors, certain heresies which have been judged likely to contradict these practical and vital rules. . . . And no one, presumably, will be surprised, after this, at the condemnation included in the Syllabus of Pope Pius X, in article xxvi, which is directed especially against M. Le Roy: 'Anathema is whoever shall say, 'Dogmas are to be understood only according to their implications for action, that is, not as rules of faith but as rules of conduct'''" (p. 310).

Le Roy and Sorel are both men of technical competence. Le Roy is a professor of mathematics. Sorel is an engineer and technician, well informed in the history of science. M. Sorel contends that the history of science and of philosophy has been much influenced by the

progress of technique. "The aim of experimental science is, then, to construct an artificial nature (if such a term may be used), in place of real nature, by imitating the combinations that enter into experimental mechanisms." And, pressing his idea to the limit, he does not hesitate to conclude that "'to speak accurately, there are no laws of nature, but only laws of mechanism, by means of which we reproduce under certain definite circumstances certain determinations similar to those (*voisine de celles*) that are given by natural bodies.' According to M. Sorel, 'savants of to-day no longer believe in determinism'" (p. 312).

If theories in physics are instruments of action, theories of politics and of society are even more obviously so, and the orthodox political theories are instruments of antiquated class domination.

It is a pity that M. Parodi has not told us more about Sorel. I have not, of course, repeated all that he tells, but Sorel is interesting on his own account, and not merely as formulating a left wing of Bergsonism. He is free of the usual academic flavor, and the ideas in his books and articles are ideas that students of philosophy have usually not met with before. And it may be that the syndicalist appropriation of creative evolution is one of the reasons why a return to the philosophy of clear and distinct ideas seems to M. Parodi so desirable.

Other writers who have handled the ethical side of M. Bergson's philosophy are Weber, de Gaultier, Pradines, Wilbois and Chide (pp. 315-24). As for the opposition, as early as 1898 M. B. Jacob raised a cry of alarm. In 1914 M. Maritain denounced Bergson's philosophy as the fountain-head of modernist heresy. Benda's clever but petulant little book appeared in 1912. M. René Berthelot published *Un romantisme utilitaire* in 1913.

The ultimate importance of all this for the French is, as M. Parodi insists, in its relation to ethics, and the great problem is how to write ethics in normative terms. I think I do not altogether understand, but to judge by M. Parodi's description, his colleagues are not quite prepared, with the exception of those of the school of Durkheim, to write ethics in terms of candid description. M. Lévy-Bruhl, it appears, "separates completely the two elements of the old concept of ethics. Every science is theoretical, but as such it can not be practical nor initiate action; its only purpose is to understand, it has no call to approve or to condemn. Every ethic, on the contrary is an affair of action and practise" (p. 356). "How is a normative science possible? Is there not a real contradiction between the idea of science and the idea of norm?" (p. 350). "*Telle est la crise inévitable de l'idée de morale théorique dans la pensée con-*

temporaire.” Obviously, or so it seems to the present reviewer, the difficulty is unnecessary, and results, not from the data of morals being indescribable in consistent terms, but from an unwillingness to give up the dialectical method. Light should come naturally enough when critics no longer seek absolute sanctions outside of the region of empirical human affairs.

Again the sociologists Belot and Rauh have reinstated the individual conscience. Loisy has made his interesting contribution, coming at one point into close agreement with Durkheim, when he holds that religion is nothing else than the mystic form of the social bond (p. 372). Others who give more importance to the rational element are Lalande, Jacob, Séailles, Buisson, Darlu, Fouillée and Lapie. It is M. Paul Lapie who, M. Parodi believes, has shown the right path for rationalism in ethics; for Lapie, ethics is logic.

Another group of writers on social and political ethics—empiricists whose will is not effaced by their deference to facts, and whose aim is to direct and modify them—includes Bouglé, Jean Jaurès, Andler, Basch, Renard, Landry, Gide and Henry Michel. All of these make use of the idea of solidarity popularized by M. Léon Bourgeois.

There remains a group of writers, interesting not so much to students of philosophy as to students of recent French experience, the men who took the stand of M. Charles Maurras and *l'Action Française*. Of this group M. Parodi has given an excellent account in an earlier book, *Traditionalisme et Démocratie* (1909). It dates from the time of the Dreyfus trial, and stands for, or stood for, ultra-nationalistic and anti-democratic reaction. Its programme included restoration of the state religion and of the monarchy, and the exaltation of military and racial pride. The group is literary rather than professionally philosophical; its two most distinguished representatives are Paul Bourget and Maurice Barrès. To them the humanitarian idealism of the eighteenth century is naïve and gratuitous folly, and the Revolution the greatest calamity ever visited upon France. No society was ever really founded on ideas or on an argument. All social stability is built on habits, instincts, associations, something that can not be transplanted, but that is a patrimony that can not be thrown away without moral suicide. This position, it is claimed, is entirely empirical, an application of the position of Comte, emancipated from all ideology and amiable superstition, which the so-called “intellectuals” so innocently seek to popularize. The personal convictions which are here offered as empirical observations are not so unlike, M. Parodi remarks, the individual “intuitions” of another school. Once give up the method of clear and distinct ideas,

which alone makes real criticism possible, and there is no longer any test of sanity—this is the message of Parodi's book. It is on this doctrine of intuition that Sorel bases his apology for revolution, and it is on something psychologically equivalent that Bourget and Barrès rest their argument for tradition.

Over against all this "anti-intellectualism" there is a vigorous protest of idealism, inspired largely by the influence of Lachelier, a systematic metaphysician of the classical type. This current of rationalism is represented by Jules Lagneau, Octave Hamelin, Léon Weber, and M. Brunschvicg. The work of Hamelin is, according to M. Parodi, the most vast and complete work of contemporary idealism (p. 432), while M. Brunschvicg represents "a sort of new idealism, idealism grown infinitely prudent and modest, ready to efface itself before positive science, limiting its ambition to understanding what science accomplishes, but upholding at the same time the essential point of view of systematic philosophy and the rights of reason" (p. 420). And M. Brunschvicg is given credit for "a new idea of truth": "Truth consists of those propositions which are substantiated"—*la vérité, c'est en somme ce qui se vérifie*—a view with which an American pragmatist should be entirely satisfied.

In spite of the work of Couturat, modern logic is, in Parodi's opinion, not a French enterprise, and so he gives it but slight attention. An effort of the most serious value, however, and a characteristically French one, initiated by M. André Lalande, is the "Philosophical Vocabulary," still unfinished, drawn up by the French Philosophical Society.

Where there is so much variety and fertility, conclusions are difficult and must be decidedly tentative. Of two things M. Parodi is sure: never has French philosophy been farther from having a unified doctrine; and, also, this lack of agreement is a sign of energy and constructive ability. Certainly a mark of French intelligence is the cooperation of philosophers and scientists in philosophical discussion. "If we consider the philosophy of science, it is remarkable there is not one of the distinguished savants of our period but has done work in philosophy at some time" (p. 387).

But when that has been said, M. Parodi ventures to speak of something like a crisis in French philosophy. Empiricism, under the influence of M. Bergson's criticism, is issuing in an intuitionism difficult to test or to describe, and lending itself to contradictory interpretations. The "unconscious," under one label or another, plays, it appears, an increasingly important rôle; but what is perhaps most serious is the degree to which a philosophy of intuition releases the individual from the control of objective criticism—in-

deed principles of evidence tend to disappear. Carried to this extent, where there is no longer any criterion of evidence, empiricism ceases to be empiricism in the scientific sense, and the heart is its own authority, as in pragmatism of the sentimental type. There is, of course, the opposition of the less adventurous, but conservatism is to-day at a disadvantage, however sound its criticism. But if empiricism of to-day has become more discriminating, more subtle and microscopic, rationalism, too, is more modest and more scientific than it used to be. Rationalism has had to go to school to science, and has learned so much that the old professional suspicions which each had of the other are largely forgotten. Apparently no French savant has any occasion to declare, as Mach had to, that he is not a philosopher and does not intend to be one.

III

M. Parodi has not given us a history of recent French philosophy, and he has not attempted to. But if French philosophy has its orientation in French life, if it includes, as one likes to suppose it does, a competent criticism of French experience, there must be many things in that experience that a student of French philosophy would like to know about. An episode need not have the dimensions of the French Revolution in order to influence discussion. French democracy was put to a very severe test by the Dreyfus affair, and M. Parodi tells in a most interesting way, particularly in his earlier book, the relation between "the affair" and certain utilizations of positivism. M. Le Roy is a Bergsonian because he is a modernist. One would like to know more about the influence of modernism on recent French formulations; whether there has been any such influence, whether any important thinkers have cared to adapt their phraseology to confessional tastes, or whether any were moved in the opposite direction by, let us say, such an incident as is connected with the name of M. Loisy. According to M. Parodi, the energy of recent philosophy has been focused on the authority of science. I well remember an address in America by M. Lévy-Bruhl, in which that distinguished philosopher said that this examination of science was, if I rightly recall, initiated by Brunetière's dramatic affirmation that science was bankrupt. One would like to know more about that. The polemic of Brunetière was, in any case, an intellectual event, however irrelevant it may have been to *la philosophie intégrale*.

It is impossible to believe that the Catholic Church in France is not a great factor in the country's intellectual life. An institution with so superb a tradition, symbolized by what is the Cathedral

of Chartres and what was the Cathedral of Rheims, is a possession for the imagination as well as a complication for politics. In many subtle ways it must help to form that fine thing we know the cultivated French mind to be. Does it affect the orientation of French philosophy, and how? And finally is not Sorel a symptom of something larger than the sum of his pages? Sorel has no good word for democracy, that compromise of middle-class domination and political corruption. It may be that democracy will soon have to be tested more severely than it was in France by the Dreyfus trial. Might one not expect that the concept of democracy would provide a central problem in French ethical discussion? I have the impression from M. Parodi's book that it does so, and in view of the trend of events it seems likely to do so more and more. Under the circumstances, criticism, foresight and direction—in a word, the rationalistic virtues—can not be esteemed too highly. Their necessary work can not be done by mysticism and individualistic intuition.

To what extent M. Parodi's exposition is influenced by the potential danger that disruptive social forces may seize upon a metaphysics of mystical intuition, I would not venture to guess. But the book is a document of firm patriotism; full of sympathy, however, with the spirit of progress and with all genuine aspiration. It is a review of what France has to offer in the way of philosophy to students from other nations that come to her universities. "*Il nous a paru bon aussi et opportun, à l'heure où nous sommes, d'exposer aux autres, et à nous mêmes, toute la richesse, toute la diversité toute la puissance de l'intelligence française.*" But that attempt, as M. Parodi surely will admit, calls for gifts and power that no single scholar can supply. I greatly wish that Parodi's fine effort might be supplemented with another review of the same ground, this time, perhaps, by some one of the school of Durkheim.

And a little skepticism may be permitted as to the danger latent in the word "intuition." M. Poincaré distinguishes two types of mathematicians, one of them holding to deductive logic, the other resorting to observation and experiment. The second type, says Poincaré, uses intuition. That M. Bergson means by the word just what Poincaré meant by it I will not insist, but there is, I believe, no reason for understanding it, in M. Bergson's usage, as meaning anything but highly expert empirical perception. Mr. Kreisler, the violinist, while serving with the Austrian army, was able, owing to the exceptional training of his ear, to distinguish differences in the sound of a moving shell that indicated something about its position or direction. The discrimination had not been made before, but to

an ear made sufficiently sensitive by experience it was a normal empirical perception, by whatever name it might be called. Intuition is, however, in spite of Poincaré's authority, an unfortunate word, for, after all, it is not M. Bergson that will misuse it, but those to whom the way of evidence and proof is too long and tedious. And these, as M. Parodi believes, may become in troubled times a danger not only to philosophy, but to the world.

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REVIEWS AND ABSTRACTS OF LITERATURE

Industrial Administration, a series of lectures. Manchester: The University Press. New York: Longmans, Green & Co. 1920. Pp. 203.

Post-war England has shown a considerable interest in the problems of industrial efficiency including the problems of effective industrial administration. This interest has brought the universities into a closer touch with industry and business and has encouraged some of them to undertake the training of executives and administrators. At Manchester it has resulted in the creation of a Department of Industrial Administration in the College of Technology. The eight lectures which comprise the present volume were delivered in this department during the session of 1918-19.

The authors are almost without exception recognized in England as authorities in the special topics with which they deal and are for the most part reporting their experiences either in actual management or else in scientific investigations carried into industry. As is to be expected in such a series there is a considerable diversity both in choice of subjects and in the methods in which these subjects are handled, ranging from a generalized discussion of the possible applications of psychology to industry to a technical report on the relation of specific atmospheric conditions to efficiency. All of the papers, however, are dealing with some phase of the administration of the human problems in industry and are concerned with the management of men rather than with the management of machines, materials, finished products—or with such topics as “cost-accounting,” “routing” or scientific management in the narrow sense. In America the volume may be described as dealing with various phases of “industrial relations” or of “personnel administration.” If British experience in this field is accurately reflected in the present volume, it does not show any marked advance over the best American theory and practise.